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ABSTRACT

Originally written to accompany a request for funds to set up a research project concerning the relationship between educational theory and organization theory, this brief report is based on the assumption that organization theory has a valuable contribution to make to the development of education as a science. First outlined are trends in educational theory in the 1960s and 1970s in Sweden. Then the case for applying organization theory to education is made, and a model is suggested of how educational processes depend on societal, institutional, and individual underlying factors. Next, two dissertations are summarized in which an organizational approach has been applied to schools. The first concerns the school as an organiztion and concludes that organization theory can clarify the complexity of school organization. The second uses an organizational approach to analyze staff development in the employment sector and recurrent education. Finally, activities planned for the initial phase of the proposed project are listed, including monitoring international developments in this area, establishing international links with researchers in this field, and compiling a document on the relation between education and organization theory to serve as a basis for further research. (JM)

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PREFACE

This report was written in support of an application to the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences for funds to set up a research project on the subject indicated by the title. So far a grant for a one-year pilot study has been made.

The reason we are now publishing this report is partly to inform others about the project and its aims, but partly also to have a basis for discussing its direction and structure with fellow research workers. We hope opportunities to do so will arise in the form of both seminars and informal meetings. In addition we are grateful for comments and suggestions from readers whom we are unable to meet face to face.

Uppsala, Sweden, September 1982

Erik Wallin Magnus Söderström Gunnar Berg

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1 INTRODUCTION

The existence of common ground between the theory of education and organization theory has not always been entirely self-evident. The realization that education does not take place in a vacuum, but in a structural setting in which organizational factors play an essential part, has brought out the relationship between the two disciplines somewhat more clearly. To look into this question, an informal team of researchers was recently formed at the Department of Education of Uppsala University, consisting at present of the above-signed. Our first undertaking was to hold a fairly extensive series of lectures and seminars on the development and theory of organizations in the academic year 1981/82. The pilot study described below is intended to be another part of the work of this team.

In support of our application we outline below the possible structure and orientation of a pilot study leading to a research project on the relationship between the theory of education and organization theory.

This pilot study is intended to be the first stage of a theoretical investigation into the relationship between education and rganization theory and the uses to which organization theory can be put in educational research.

Our application relates to funding for an initial period of a year, which would be used to plan a subsequent, larger-scale project in this field. This planning stage would start with a study of the literature and a survey of international developments in the area, leading to the drafting of a policy document and a programme for subsequent research.

Primarily the project can be regarded as an opportunity to enrich the development of educational theory as a discipline, particularly in terms of increasing the weight attached to explanatory and contextual factors in the elucidation of educational processes and phenomena. In this report a study of organization theory has, we feel, a particularly valuable contribution to make to the future development of education as a science.

The proposed project builds on what we have learnt about the use of organization theory from two research programmes condected at the Department of Education of Uppsala University. The findings of these projects, presented in two recently published dissertations (Berg 1981, Söderström 1981b), will be outlined and discussed in section 3 below.

2 TRENDS IN THE THEORY OF EDUCATION; AND WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO STUDY ORGANIZATION THEORY

2.1 Development of the discipline in the 1960s and 1970s

The concerns of educational theory are upbringing, training, instruction, and other forms of systematic influence, often summarized as educational processes. The orientation of the discipline was examined over ten years ago by the Swedish Government Commission (SOU 1970:22), which argued that this discipline was concerned with education and training in the broadest sense and with the integration of different aspects of educational processes within its sphere of interest. Educational theory was not regarded as self-sufficient in terms of knowledge, but held to be highly dependent on interdisciplinary co-operation with both social science and the humanities. Its relationship to other disciplines was also examined in detail by Dahllöf (1970) and was the subject of a more recent discussion in the journal Forskning om utbildning (Westin 1977).

The Government Commission examined the theory of education from three angles, those of the individual, the classroom, and society. The relative weight attached to these lines of approach appears to have varied over time and from one institution to another. Although micro-level problems have at times been the central concern of researchers, considerable effort has also been expended on historical and comparative studies of educational problems and investigations into the goals and functions of instruction in relation to society as a whole.

Traditionally, educational research has laid particular emphasis on general issues of education and development, with the result that the school system has come to occupy a special position within the discipline.

In recent years many educationalists have focused their attention on the societal and broad environmental factors regulating educational processes of various kinds. This growing interest in the relationship between education and its context has led to a growth in research focusing on the correlation between processes of systematic influence

on the one hand and "frame factors" and environmental factors of various kinds on the other (Dahllöf 1967, 1970, 1971, Bjerstedt 1970, Lundgren 1972, 1979, Kallós & Lundgren 1972). It has also resulted in a greater interest among students of educational phenomena in macro-level aspects generally and in their interaction with micro-level phenomena.

At the same time, educational researchers have increasingly concerned themselves with processes of systematic influence and change in the community at large and at places of work, i.e. outside the traditional school framework. In particular an increasing amount of research has been done on adult education and adult learning and on various kinds of physical and psychiatric treatment. Education and training in firms and public bodies have also received attention over the past five years (see Söderström 1981b).

In line with this development, researchers have started to study school organization from the point of view of change, reasoning that a better understanding of how curricula function in practice can only be gained by studying the organizational prerequisites of change in the school system. Project 6041, under the direction of Erik Wallin, for example, had this line of attack (Wallin & Berg 1982, Berg 1981).

In other words, the change intended to result from educational measures and such changes in educational establishments as are needed to bring them about together form an interesting whole from the point of view of educational research. It is therefore only to be expected that discussion within the discipline about what issues and fields of research should be tackled should be pointing more and more to processes of change in general, a development to which Edfeldt & Jansson (1976), for instance, refer when they observe that educational theory is concerned with "change as a function" (p 5, our translation):

"With this point of departure we are anxious to understand how changes are brought about in various settings, how we can influence change processes, and what such processes entail for the people they affect".

Though this interpretation of educational theory would hardly meet with general acceptance, it does nevertheless indicate that interest

in studying educational processes in the framework of society is increasing and the sphere of activity of educational researchers widening. It also reflects the broader view of the social functions of education which has gradually emerged. It is interesting to note, however, that Stukát focused on the question of change, albeit in a rather narrower sense, as long ago as 1968, pointing out that teaching and education in general set out to change people in a socially desirable manner. According to Stukát (1968), the foremost task of educational research is to investigate the conditions under which such change can take place.

Within educational research in the 1970s - as in other branches of the social sciences - the systems approach, which by that time had become fairly well established, came to be questioned and modified in some quarters and a conflict-centred approach began to gain ground (see Lundgren 1979, Isling 1980, Lindblad 1980). In addition an action approach emerged. Naturally the discipline was influenced both by general trends in the philosophy of science in the 1970s and, more particularly, by a change of paradigm in educational sociology (see Johansson 1971, Abrahamsson 1974). A number of Marxist schools of thought contributed to this, despite their apparent lack of mutual agreement (Broady 1978, Berner et al. 1979). The break between the functionalistic and the more conflict-oriented approaches did not, however, have any adverse effect on researchers' interest in integral conceptions of educational processes - if anything, quite the opposite. The importance of such conceptions was indeed underlined by increasing contact with other social sciences, particularly sociology, human geography, and to some extent business studies. The meaning of an integral view of educational processes and the need to study the various factors underlying them was, however, discussed over a decade ago by the Government Commission mentioned earlier. What has happened since then, though, is that the concept of the integral whole has taken on a new and more interesting meaning.

Growing interest in adult education, and in particular in the problems surrounding recurrent education, has in various ways underlined the importance of a more comprehensive view of the relationship be-

tween processes of education, influence and change and the circumstances of individuals. The interaction of the various environments, roles and life cycles of individuals is of vital importance in elucidating how education and change function in particular situations. Educational theory, like other social sciences, is expected to perform both analytical and normative tasks in this connection. It often appears desirable to be able not only to increase our knowledge about the prior conditions and characteristics of key educational processes in community and working life, but also to participate in a tangible way in a variety of efforts to bring about development and change. Such an approach to educational research is of course dependent on continued theoretical and methodological development in the discipline itself and on contact with other fields.

As far as the further development of educational theory itself is concerned, we consider two questions to be of particular interest. To begin with, explanations at a theoretical level are crucial if we are to shed light on the underlying conditions and characteristics of educational processes and phenomena, irrespective of where they in fact take place. (It should be borne in mind that the search for theoretically sound explanations has occasionally had to take second place to what are often short-term normative requirements.) And secondly, it is essential to study context factors and their relationship to educational processes and phenomena for the very reason that sound explanations are needed.

The research tradition relating to "frame factors", which began with Dahllöf (1967) and was later developed by Lundgren (1972) among others, illustrates the issues mentioned above very well, showing as it does the importance of explanatory and contextual factors.

The weight attached to context factors has, however, varied considerably among educationalists, appearing moreover to be dependent on the particular level of analysis chosen. The three approaches referred to by the aforementioned Government Commission, relating to society, the classroom, and the individual, illustrate this. Our view, on which we shall develop below, however, is that context or classroom-centred perspective. The studies undertaken by Dahllöf (1967) and Lundgren

(1972), as well as some research on evaluation (Franke-Wikberg & Johansson 1976, Elgqvist-Saltzman 1976), suggest indirectly that an institutional dimension might make us better able to explain the significance of educational processes and phenomena. It was with this in mind that we recently began examining how an institutional approach might be evolved and used to contribute towards theoretically sound explanations of educational problems. Clearly, by introducing this institutional perspective, we can arrive at a better understanding of what context is all about, since the immediate context constituted by such organizations as schools, institutions providing treatment, and places of work can then be distinguished from the more general context of society or the wider environment. Opportunities for the discipline to develop in an interesting and rewarding manner are, we believe, opened up in this way.

What an institutional approach entails and what opportunities we have to develop it depend, furthermore, on how we as educationalists can put the results and methods of organization theory to use in our own research. Thus we believe the theory of organizations to be an important source of knowledge and the establishment of links with this field a matter of urgency.

2.2 Educational research and organization theory

The growing interest in studying educational processes in relation to context factors of various kinds has accentuated the need for an institutional angle on educational issues. Organizational factors, in other words, help to explain what actually happens in educational situations. Such factors as forms of control, the distribution of power, the interests of the responsible authorities, technology, forms of organization, and organizational climate may need to be studied if we are to gain a better understanding of educational processes. In addition, it may be necessary to study the history of an organization in order to cast more light on current problems.

An institutional dimension has, as was mentioned earlier, been used in research into the school as an organization (Patriksson 1971, Svingby

1977, Berg 1981), processes of change in higher education (Östergren & Berg 1977), informal development and qualification processes in companies (Brunander 1975) and various types of treatment (Stensmo 1979). The Uppsala Project on Recurrent Education also examined training and other forms of educational development in firms and public authorities from an organizational point of view (Söderström 1981b). In every case far better opportunities arose for explaining and understanding problems which had previously been studied within a more limited frame of reference. A parallel can also be drawn here with certain areas of sociological research, concerned with the relationship between production techniques and work organization on the one hand and the development of workers' qualifications on the other (Dahlström 1980, Björkman & Lundquist 1981).

An institutional approach within educational theory means supplementing previously applied angles and levels of analysis - the societal, classroom-oriented, and individual perspectives - with an additional level. In practice this means regarding the underlying organizational conditions of educational processes as important explanatory factors. Organization theory is thus becoming an increasingly important source of inspiration for the educational research of today - and no doubt, of tomorrow. There are two reasons for this. First, educational processes take place in an organizational context of one kind or another - companies, public authorities, institutions providing treatment, or schools - and organizational factors such as forms of control, technology, organizational principles, forms of work, etc., can be assumed to have either a detrimental or a beneficial effect on the course of and benefits accruing to the individual from the educational processes in progress, whether planned or otherwise. Second, and not least, training and education are often used as strategies for changing organizations, for example in terms of worker participation in management, work organization, and technology. On both these scores, organization theory has a great deal to contribute to the explanation of problems, interactions, and processes.

The term organization theory is of course neither unambiguous nor uncontroversial. What we are referring to here, therefore, is the use of

such theoretical knowledge of organizations as can have an explanatory value, bearing in mind the value perspective, purpose and structure generally of any particular study. This means that it may in fact prove necessary for educationalists themselves to make certain demands of organization theory (see, for example, Söderström 1981a).

Bearing in mind the development of educational theory discussed here, studies of educational processes in organizations such as firms and public authorities might be based on a model of analysis such as the one below:

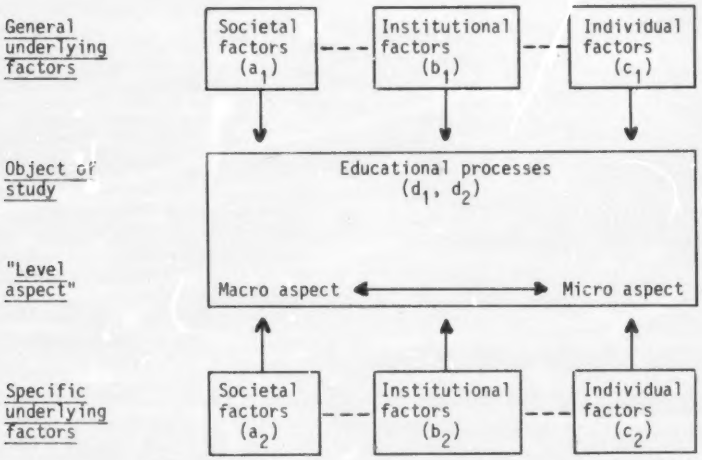


Figure 1 Educational processes as objects of research in relation to various general and specific underlying factors (from Söderström 1981b)

We consider educational processes to be dependent on societal, institutional and individual underlying factors or variables, which may be either general (a_1 - c_1) or specific, i.e. related to particular cases (a particular organization in a given society involving specified individuals, a_2- c_2). Specific factors can be explained and understood chiefly with reference to the corresponding general factors. Processes

can be discussed as general phenomena (d_1) or individual cases (d_2). It may of course prove difficult to draw a distinction between different kinds of factors. The above figure merely illustrates the broad outlines as we see them.

3 TWO EXAMPLES OF HOW AN ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH HAS BEEN USED AND WHAT IT HAS TAUGHT US

3.1 The school as an organization - a brief summary of a dissertation

As we indicated earlier, the frontiers of educational theory used more or less to coincide with the walls of the classroom. Phenomena in a variety of teaching situations were described and analysed very much in isolation. A psychologizing approach predominated. In recent years some educationalists (e.g. Lundgren 1977) have broken with this tradition and started to examine classroom phenomena from the point of view of society, looking for instance at how social structures in the community as a whole are reflected in schools or how schools perform their task of socializing of qualifying manpower. Such studies thus work on premises, or at levels, other than those of the school system itself.

We believe that between the traditional and the society-oriented approaches there is room for a third level of analysis, an organizational level. Only a limited number of researchers have studied the school in organizational perspective, most of them working in the United States. In our view, however, a characteristic of their approach is that to a large extent it excludes the social structure dimension.

How then can school organization be described and analysed from the point of view of change and at a level other than that of the school in isolation, and how would we define the school as an organization?

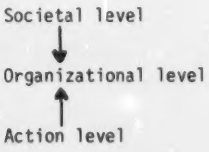
Looking at the school from the point of view of society (at the societal level), it is essential to determine what mechanisms ultimately regulate the processes at work in its organizational structure. Society has in fact two different systems at its disposal for steering or controlling the school, an administrative and an educational system of control. The educational control system sets out chiefly to steer objectives. It embraces descriptions of educational goals (school legislation and national curricula) and instructions about, among other things, methods and forms of working, which shool staff themselves interpret and base their actions on. The administrative system is one of

direct control, founded on more or less "fine-meshed" rules, statutory orders, regulations and instructions. The natural thing would be for the administrative control system to be subordinate to the educational, that is for rules to be drawn up as a means of achieving desired goals. However, it does not always work out that way, and rules often become ends in themselves. Rules and goals are sometimes found to conflict.

If, on the other hand, we consider the school at the level at which its staff act, often referred to as the actor or action level, we find that school activities are not governed exclusively by society. They are also determined by the informal rules, practices, norms, power systems, values, etc., prevailing both in the school system as a whole and, with local variations, in individual schools. These norms, values, power relations, etc., stem in part from the traditions and history of the school. Together they can be said to form the nucleus of the fundamental philosophy predominant in the school system. Within any one school they can be said to constitute that school's "culture".

How can we describe the school as an organization within this frame of reference?

So far we have taken the first step towards such a description. The school as an organization is evidently characterized by an interaction of the control brought to bear by society (educational and administrative control) and that exercised by the action level "culture". Specific characteristics of the school as an organization derive from the simultaneous influence of both these levels, which can be illustrated as follows:



Thus far, then, we have defined the school as an organization as a func-

tion of the control stemming from the societal and action levels. To gain a concrete understanding of school organization we must, however, go one step further and evolve a set of relevant concepts which can be used to describe and analyse the school as an organization. We believe that the concepts coercive organization, bureaucratic/administrative organization, and professional organization can help to give a fairly coherent organizational picture of the school.

The term coercive organization refers to the fact that pupils are recruited to school (in Sweden the nine-year comprehensive school) solely on the basis of their age and place of residence (compulsory school attendance being what we would call structural coercion). This coercion can be applied in different ways locally (substantial coercion). In extreme cases teachers and other members of staff may end up with a purely supervisory role vis-à-vis their pupils. The concept of the school as a professional organization relates to the autonomy the national curricula allow members of staff and to the ways in which use is made of this autonomy locally. The school as a bureaucratic/administrative organization is the result of interaction between central and local rule systems (e.g. educational legislation - timetabling, local resource allocation, etc.). We use the term school bureaucracy when the rules are not compatible with educational goals, school administration when the opposite case applies.

3.1.1 Why is it important to study the school as an organization?

Our particular interest in the school as an organization can be put down to its complexity. The overall structure, authority and social structures, etc., of the school are so many-sided that it is not unreasonable to describe the school system as one of the most complex organizations in society today. It is our belief that organizational studies of the school can lay the foundations of a deeper understanding of the school as a socially defined phenomenon. As the final report on Project 6041 (Berg 1981) indicates, schools exist in all their complexity; the theory fragment presented there can help to reduce this complexity so that the basic features of their work structures become more clearly and easily discernible. This will then make fur-

ther research possible and enable us thus to acquire knowledge about the basic phenomena constituting the complex organization of the school.

3.2 Staff development in the employment sector and recurrent education

Within the Uppsala Project on Recurrent Education (UPPAT) a special study was made of staff training and development in companies and public bodies as part of a recurrent education strategy (Söderström 1981b). In Söderström's dissertation the educational processes making up staff training and development are analysed in relation to educational policy and organization theory. This is done in two stages, namely

a. by describing and developing an educational policy approach and an organizational approach to be used as a basis for analysing educational processes in firms and public bodies, and
b. analysing these educational processes as phenomena in terms of the two approaches.

The organizational approach is described elsewhere (Söderström 1981a). The deliberations underlying it are subsequently used, firstly, to develop the educational policy perspective and, secondly, to analyse certain characteristics of the object of study, staff development.

The educational policy approach is developed and given more concrete form as follows. First the key features of Sweden's adult education policy - with the emphasis on recurrent education - are examined and the fundamental problems surrounding this policy discussed. Subsequently, three basic arguments for recurrent education are analysed, namely knowledge development and flexibility, the need to bridge differences in education, and the contribution of education to people's quality of life. There then follows a discussion of how educational policy aims and arguments can be made more concrete by educational planning. Finally the main features of the educational policy approach are summarized under the heading "Recurrent education as a social programme".

The organizational perspective incorporates three areas of concern: a) the relationship between individuals and work, conceptions of the individual in the employment sector, job satisfaction, and developmental characteristics in terms of the organization and structuring of work (Söderström 1981a, chapters 2-5); b) the usefulness of various schools of organization theory as a frame of reference for studying staff development, particular emphasis being placed on a comparison of systems theory with the action approach and rationalism, and on the differing conceptions of organizational goals and efficiency thus arising (chapters 6-8); and c) problems encountered in efforts to bring about change in organizations, with particular reference to the prerequisites of and potential for change (chapters 9-10).

In the concluding section of the dissertation there follows a summary and discussion of the entire study on the basis of the above-mentioned approaches. In addition, possible means of developing recurrent education, staff development and research in these areas are considered.

The issues tackled in the dissertation can be described with regard to purpose and approach as follows:

Purpose	Approach: Organizational ↓ Educational policy ↓
Mainly analytical	a) What goals and functions does and can staff development have, both in organizations - firms and public bodies - and in society as a whole? b) How is staff development influenced by various underlying factors, particularly these relating to organizational activities?
Mainly normative	c) What part can staff development play in a more highly developed system of recurrent education? d) What planning strategies are needed to further staff development as part of recurrent education?

Figure 2 The issues examined in the study with regard to purpose and approach

It is emphasized in the dissertation that under certain conditions staff development can be an effective means of promoting recurrent education for large groups of the population. How far this is possible, however, is dependent on what goals and frameworks govern the operations of firms and public authorities. Staff development can thus be seen as a latent field of tension between different interests and individuals in both the employment sector as a whole and particular firms and public bodies. The future direction of staff development as a form of recurrent education is therefore dependent on the goal conceptions, priorities, and criteria of efficiency embraced by the various individuals concerned. An important condition for more systematic recurrent education measures is that the development of working life in these respects be founded on a social concept of rationality.

The study outlined here would not have been possible without an organizational dimension. In particular this frame of reference made it possible to put the goals possibilities, limitations and effects of staff development in the context of the factors which primarily regulate its prior conditions in firms and public authorities. In addition, job satisfaction - and such qualitative components of it as opportunities for education and development - could be discussed on the basis of an organizational analysis of the relationship between individual and work.

4 ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE INITIAL (PILOT) PHASE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Within the framework of the proposed project the following activities are planned:

1. The research team will monitor international developments in the field of educational research in relation to organization theory by studying relevant literature.

2. The team will establish international links with researchers and others working in similar fields. To this end, a visit by Magnus Söderström and Gunnar Berg to the United States is planned. The aim is to explore the possibility of setting up a network of people interested in this area of research.

The team will organize courses of lectures and seminars at postgraduate level, the first being held in the 1981/82 academic year.

3. The team will compile and publish a policy document on the relationship between education and organization theory, which will form a programme for future research. This document will examine the links between the two disciplines, touched upon above (see section 2.2), and the issues which seem in most urgent need of further research. By producing such a document at a fairly early stage, it should be possible to spark off comments and suggestions of benefit to our subsequent work.

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